

VZCZCXRO3123
RR RUEHFL RUEHNP
DE RUEHRO #2208/01 2911519
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
R 181519Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9267
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0382
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0311
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE 0324
RUEHSQ/AMEMBASSY SKOPJE 0820
RUEHTI/AMEMBASSY TIRANA 4310
RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB 0778
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN 9040
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE 2712
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES 2853
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2901
RUEHPS/USOFFICE PRISTINA 0409

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ROME 002208

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/15/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PARM](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [PINS](#) [OSCE](#) [IT](#)
AF, IZ, YI, GG, RU, MK
SUBJECT: ITALY: EUR/RPM DIRECTOR GARY ROBBINS DISCUSSES
AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ, KOSOVO WITH ITALIAN OFFICIALS

Classified By: Acting Political Minister-Counselor Jonathan Cohen for R
easons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: EUR/RPM Director Gary Robbins engaged Italian officials on Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, Georgia and other NATO and OSCE issues during October 4 meetings in Rome. On Afghanistan, GOI officials said that Italy wanted to see NATO prioritize civilian over military information in its strategic messaging, argued against describing the military commitment there as "long-term" to the Italian public, and hoped for a gradual shift in ISAF priorities from combat operations to training. On Iraq, Italy would like to see NATO expand its commitment, possibly through the use of partnership instruments. GOI officials also expressed concern over a unilateral declaration of independence in Kosovo, perceived Georgian rashness in confrontations with Russia, and the possibility that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia might be left behind Albania and Croatia in its bid for NATO membership. End Summary

¶2. (SBU) Gary Robbins, Director of the Office of European Security and Political Affairs (EUR/RPM), met with GOI officials in Rome on October 4 to discuss Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, and a range of other NATO and OSCE issues. Robbins met with MFA Political-Military Affairs Director Gianni Bardini, MFA OSCE Office Director Brunella Borzi, MFA Afghanistan DAS-level equivalent Sergio Mercuri, MOD Diplomatic Advisor Achille Amerio and MOD General Alberto Rosso. Robbins also met with a group of Italian foreign affairs students to discuss NATO and OSCE issues and gave an interview to L'Unita - an influential left-leaning daily newspaper - before proceeding to Palermo to deliver remarks and participate in a conference organized by the Italian Atlantic Treaty Association. He was also interviewed by a Sicilian regional newspaper.

Afghanistan: Italy Seeks Clearer Benchmarks

¶3. (C) Robbins asked about the level of public and political support in Italy for ISAF. Both Bardini and MOD Diplomatic

Advisor Achille Amerio said that Italy is committed to Afghanistan for the long term, although the Prodi government's fragile majority and fear of casualties will continue to condition the way in which the issue is discussed publicly. Both also stressed that advertising Afghanistan as requiring a "long-term" military commitment would backfire and sap public support in Italy. The GOI feels that NATO's strategic messaging needs to be realigned away from body counts and toward civilian success stories, Bardini explained. The Italian public needs to see that NATO's military involvement in Afghanistan is not permanent, but that there are clear benchmarks along the way toward the ultimate goal of turning all security functions over to the Afghans, and that ISAF was there to support Karzai, not replace him. Along these lines, Italy would like to see a gradual shift on NATO's part from combat operations to training and had presented proposals to this effect at NATO in the past (including a proposal for the creation of new military training academies sponsored by individual nations).

Italy also felt that the Afghanistan Compact was becoming outdated: the 2010 targets were not likely to be achieved and it would be best to identify intermediate targets. Amerio suggested the topic of public support for NATO's Afghanistan mission could be an agenda item for the upcoming MOD Parisi - SecDef meeting in Washington on October 30.

14. (C) Robbins agreed that we need to do a better job of presenting the entire package to our publics: not just military operations, but the full spectrum of action. He stressed that a large component of the OEF mission involves training, and added that more effort needs to be put into telling Afghanistan's many success stories (the fizzling of

ROME 00002208 002 OF 004

the Taliban spring offensive, the expansion of Kabul's authority throughout the country, etc.). With regard to the Compact and the provision of development assistance to Afghanistan, Robbins said that the U.S. believes a special coordinating figure was needed to guide both UNAMA and non-UN civilian efforts. Bardini agreed, but stressed that the UN needed to be at center stage.

15. (C) Robbins praised the coordination that went into the Italian-led ISAF mission to rescue two Italian Military Intelligence Officers on September 24 and inquired into the health of the officers. Bardini said that one of the officers was still on life support (Note: the officer died later the same day) but that from a tactical point of view the raid yielded a much better outcome than the Mastrogiacomo hostage crisis of March 2007 (in which the Italian journalist was exchanged for imprisoned Taliban leaders). The reaction from the Far Left members of PM Prodi's governing coalition to the ISAF raid was moderate. Robbins said the action helped to show that NATO members are once again on the same page with regard to hostages. Bardini added that the GOI was closely watching President Karzai's outreach to moderate Taliban leaders and hoped that Karzai could avoid publicizing the details of the initiative until a positive, concrete agreement had been achieved.

Iraq: Increasing NATO's Role

16. (C) Robbins thanked Bardini for Italy's work in the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I). Noting that the Carabinieri-led NTM-I training of Iraqi National Police is scheduled to start in the next few days, Bardini said that Italy would like to see NATO more involved in Iraq. He wondered whether it would be possible, now that the attitude of the French appears to be changing, for NATO to expand its cooperation with Iraq. This could be achieved through the use of PfP-style instruments, the creation of a Framework Agreement with NATO similar to Afghanistan's, and/or by inviting Iraqi officials to NATO summits and to brief the NAC. Robbins agreed that this idea fit with the Riga

partnership approach and urged Italy to work with other Allies to bring forward such a possibility.

Kosovo

17. (S) Turning to Kosovo, Bardini said that the GOI was concerned about the possibility of unilateral declarations of independence by the Kosovars on one hand and separately by the Kosovo Serbs or Belgrade on the other. Amerio said the GOI was calling for EU unity on the issue. Robbins agreed that KFOR needed to be prepared for the possibility but noted that the Troika had rejected the idea of partition. Bardini said that the Troika should be given a chance to find a solution acceptable to the parties and that the international community should avoid indicating that the outcome can be taken for granted. He also noted that the GOI had reservations about NATO SYG's proposal to quietly send a few experts to Kosovo to help NATO prepare for eventual Post-Status changes in the security environment. However, Bardini said that should such a team be sent, Italy would like to be included. Robbins agreed that it should be done quietly, to prevent any new NATO presence from being used by either side for political purposes. He also said that USG lawyers were looking into whether UNSCR 1244 authorities could still be used in the event of a unilateral declaration of independence on the part of the Kosovars. Bardini speculated that Italy would likely be on-board with our analysis.

ROME 00002208 003 OF 004

Georgia: Italy Will Reluctantly Support MAP

18. (C) On Georgia, Bardini said that the GOI was "open to the idea of offering a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Georgia at Bucharest" and would not block it. However, Italy is concerned Georgia could use MAP to aggravate tensions with Russia. Moscow is not alone in deserving blame for the recent rise in tensions; Georgian threats of using force in Abkhazia are equally unhelpful. Italy does not want NATO used as leverage by Georgia against Russia: NATO is there to increase stability, not undermine it. If we are to offer a MAP at Bucharest, the Georgians should show signs of being more "reasonable" in their confrontations with Russia. The U.S. view, Robbins replied, was that Georgia had in fact shown considerable restraint in the face of multiple provocations (including the missile incident, the causes of which had now been established by the OSCE investigative team). He regretted the fact that NATO PermReps had not joined the SYG in his trip to Tblisi. The U.S. would continue to counsel restraint in its dealings with Tblisi, but slowing down Georgia's cooperation with NATO was not the appropriate response to Russia's behavior in the region.

Italy Pushes for Balkan Three Membership at Bucharest

19. (C) Bardini asked whether the U.S. was cooling to FYROM's membership bid. Both Bardini and Amerio said it would be unwise to separate the three applicant countries; NATO needs to give a strong sign of support to the Balkans. Amerio added that it was necessary, in particular, to send the Albanians a strong political signal that they are "wanted" in order to help them complete the MAP process. Robbins replied that the U.S. considers each applicant individually and is not dwelling on any sort of "end-game" for Bucharest. While Bucharest would not be mainly an "enlargement summit," the U.S. would like to see the maximum possible degree of NATO enlargement. Still, each new ally must be a net contributor to collective security. He added that Ambassador Nuland planned to lead a U.S. team to each of the three capitals in

November to counsel each applicant country on what more needed to be done, and that these visits would be conducted in full transparency.

NATO and Disarmament

¶10. (C) Bardini said that the GOI had co-signed the recent German-Norwegian Proposal on Arms Control, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament because it agreed that this was an area not adequately covered in the NAC, but did not want the issue to become divisive. He noted that NATO discussion of integrating PSI into NATO activities like Active Endeavor might once again become a possibility given the new French attitude.

OSCE

¶11. (C) Robbins expressed concern that the preparations for the November OSCE ministerial were moving slowly. He said EUR A/S Fried would travel to Madrid to discuss preparations and that we would keep Italy informed. Borzi said that Italy shares U.S. reservations and is also concerned about the possible negative impact of the CFE debate and general tensions with Russia on both the ministerial and the renewal of the mandate for the OSCE Kosovo mission, which expires December 13. Italy fears that there might be no political declaration for the third year in a row and that negotiations over the charter could open a Pandora's box. Borzi said she

ROME 00002208 004 OF 004

is wary of the Spanish ministerial proposal because she does not see obvious deliverables. She added that having a Chairman-in-Office (CiO) from a Central Asian country could be useful in moving the organization forward. Robbins agreed, noting that the U.S. welcomes Kazakhstan's aspiration to be CiO, but continues to believe that a 2009 CiO bid for Kazakhstan is premature.

¶12. (U) EUR/RPM Director Gary Robbins cleared this message.

SPOGLI